

DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING EMPLOYEES IN A HEARING WORKPLACE

JOHN C. WYVILL, JD

Executive Director

Nebraska Commission for the Deaf
and Hard of Hearing

October 28, 2015



▶ “ Being Blind cuts you off from things...
being Deaf cuts you off from people”

▶ HELEN KELLER

NEBRASKA STATISTICS

- ▶ 48 million adults in the U.Ss report some form of hearing loss
- ▶ By age 65: 1 out of 3 people report some form of hearing loss
- ▶ 60% of people with hearing loss are either in the workforce or educational setting
- ▶ 9% of the Nebraska population is Hard of Hearing
 - ▶ 162,000
- ▶ 1% of the population is Deaf
 - ▶ 18,000

Source: Hearing Loss Association of America and Gallaudet University for Assessment and Demographic Studies: Third Edition, 1994

INTEGRATION INTO THE WORKPLACE

- ▶ Pre Employment
- ▶ New Employee Orientation
- ▶ On the Job
- ▶ Common Challenges in a Hearing Workplace
- ▶ Deaf Culture

PRE EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES

- ▶ Prepare the receptionist in expecting a deaf applicant
- ▶ Prepare coworkers by reviewing communication strategies
- ▶ Discuss with managers the best way to facilitate integration
- ▶ Ask about their communication preference
- ▶ Retain a qualified interpreter
- ▶ Ensure upper level management support
- ▶ Multiple ways to make reasonable accommodations
- ▶ “One size does not fit all”

NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

- ▶ If using video files, use closed captioning
- ▶ Provide name tags and job titles
- ▶ Provide an organizational chart
- ▶ Hire an interpreter for the first day (if needed)

ON THE JOB

- ▶ Ask the individual how best to get their attention (tap shoulder, hand wave, flashing lights)
- ▶ Allow extra time for communication with training
- ▶ Provide an outline of the training session
- ▶ Assignment of a mentor in training
- ▶ Include employees in conversations, work break activities, and social events.
- ▶ Follow up on communication plan

COMMON CHALLENGES IN HEARING WORKPLACE

- ▶ Emergency Procedures
- ▶ Training and Meetings
- ▶ Coworker Communications

DEAF CULTURE

- ▶ “Deaf culture consists of the norms, beliefs, values, and morals shared by members of the Deaf community. We believe that it is fine to be Deaf. If given the chance to become hearing, most of us would choose to remain Deaf.”
- ▶ American Sign Language
- ▶ English is a second language

AUDISM

- ▶ Simply put, Audism is a negative or oppressive attitude towards deaf people by either deaf or hearing people and organizations, and a failure to accommodate them.
- ▶ People who have audist attitudes are considered to be audists. In Deaf Culture, calling someone an audist is like calling someone a racist.
- ▶ For example, the refusal or failure to use sign language in the presence of a sign language-dependent person is considered audism.

FREE RESOURCE

- ▶ John C. Wyvill
- ▶ Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- ▶ 4600 Valley Road Ste 420
- ▶ Lincoln NE 68510-4844
- ▶ John.wyvill@nebraska.gov
- ▶ (402)-471-3593